

Russia Recognizes Two Donbass Republics to Stop Ukraine's Violence

By [Lucas Leiroz de Almeida](#)

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*Russian **President Vladimir Putin** signed a new federal decree this Monday, February 22, recognizing the independence of the People's Republics of Lugansk and Donetsk, which since 2014 have been fighting against the ethnic persecution promoted by the Ukrainian armed forces in the region of Donbass. With this attitude, the Russian Federation changes its way of seeing the conflict, no longer analyzing it as a civil war, but as a confrontation between different national states.*

“I give it necessary to make a decision that should have been made long ago - to immediately recognize the sovereignty and independence of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Lugansk People's Republic”. These were the words of Vladimir Putin when he signed the decree recognizing Lugansk and Donetsk as sovereign states. The move was applauded by the population in the Donbass region, which for eight years have been waiting for international recognition of their freedom. As expected, the measure was immediately supported and followed by other non-aligned countries, such as Cuba, Serbia, Venezuela, among others, which significantly expands the possibilities of insertion of the sovereign republics of the Donbass in the international scenario, both from a political and diplomatic perspective as well as from a commercial one.

During his speech, Putin emphasized that Ukraine is part of Russian history and that the formation of the Ukrainian state was due to a political initiative by Moscow during Soviet times, which makes it unjustifiable for Ukraine to promote any kind of persecution against Russians in its territory, making legitimate the revolt of the Russian-speaking population, for which political separation from the post-Maidan genocidal government became the only possible option. These were some of his words in this regard:

“Ukraine is not just a neighbor to us, but an inherent part of our history, culture and spiritual space. These are our comrades...our family, people we have blood and family ties with (...) Modern Ukraine was completely created by Russia, more precisely by Bolshevik, Communist Russia. This process was started immediately after the 1917

Revolution (...) As a result of Bolshevik policy, Soviet Ukraine arose, which even today can with good reason be called 'Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's Ukraine'. He is its author and architect. This is fully confirmed in archival documents, including hard Leninist directives on the Donbass, which was literally squeezed into Ukraine".

In addition, the president also commented on the rumors that Ukraine would be resuming a military nuclear program and reaffirmed Moscow's official position that an integration of Kiev to the western military alliance (NATO) means a frontal threat to the Russian state, which cannot be accepted without reaction. In this sense, it is possible to understand that there is a central political reason for the late recognition of the Lugansk and Donetsk republics: the initial plan was to keep them integrated into Ukraine, but the situation became intolerable, and the recognition of independence became inevitable, being a reaction to the endless maneuvers of Ukrainian forces.

It is a major change in strategy on the part of Russia, but which still preserves the country's initial focus, that is to avoid any military incursion into Ukrainian territory. Until now, Russia had dealt with the war in Donbass as a civil conflict, supporting popular militias only through diplomatic means. This was due to a view of Lugansk and Donetsk as parts of the Ukrainian territory, which needed to be integrated into Kiev under basic rules of coexistence and guarantee of humanitarian protection.

As the situation escalated, Russian aid to the republics became an unavoidable necessity, but sending troops to the region would promote an "invasion" of Ukrainian sovereign space. So, Moscow acted strategically to maintain the legality of its actions and benefit the population of Donbass: it recognized both republics, which also allowed the deployment of peacekeeping troops with the consent of local governments. In other words, Russia found a way to intervene in the conflict without promoting an invasion of Ukraine. The local militias, who until now had few resources to face the violence of the Ukrainian state, will have the support of the Russian armed forces to prevent further attacks and protect the civilian population.

Russia has not committed any illegal act under international law. The United Nations permits the use of military force for the self-defense of others. With the recognition of the new states, Moscow has the right to protect them from any aggression.

In fact, Ukraine, influenced by NATO and the US, believed that it would provoke an invasion of its territory with its aggressions in the Donbass, starting a war with Russia in which it hoped to receive Western support. But this did not happen, as Russia found a way to help the republics legally and without territorial invasion. And, of course, NATO will not intervene to prevent this mission from taking place. So once again Ukraine has been deluded and will now deal alone with its own mistakes.

On Russia's part, despite the apparent change in plans, the central focus of Russian strategy for the Donbass remains the same: to neutralize the conflict without incursions against Ukraine.

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Lucas Leiroz is a researcher in Social Sciences at the Rural Federal University of Rio de Janeiro; geopolitical consultant.

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